

Employee Stress and Turnover Intentions of Employees in Hotel Organizations

Amri Ahmad

Faculty of Business and Technology, UNITAR International University, Malaysia.

Syed Munir Barakbah Syed Faozi Barakbah

Faculty of Business and Technology, UNITAR International University, Malaysia.

Baldev Raj Singh Narinder Singh

Faculty of Business and Technology, UNITAR International University, Malaysia.

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the extent of association between employee job stress level with the employee turnover intentions. A descriptive case study design was used as a guide in the data collection process, the development of propositions and instruments, and the analysis of data or information. In comparing the overall mean scores of the two variables, the result indicated a very close association between the employee job stress level with the employee turnover intentions. Regardless, however, the overview of literature did highlight some other aspects that should be considered, such as the workplace environment, workload and scheduling, the availability of career paths that would have an influence of the employees turnover intentions or the employees actual turnover rates.

Keywords

Employee Stress, Employee Turnover Intentions, Work Environment, Workload.

Introduction

The consistent customer contact and the social encounters requirement could cause service provider stress and burnout. Studies of human service practitioners which provided day-to-day contact with others, had shown a high incidents of job burnout (Stevens & Higgins, 2002). According to an evaluation by Paoli and Merllie (2001), they found that 28% of European experienced stress, and another 23% had suffered burnout. The system and changing environment of the hospitality industry presented pressures and demands that could become the cause of stress for front-line personnel. Hotel is a service-oriented

industry and the supervisors and employees had to confront, manage, and endure with the needs to meet the guests' demands. Individuals in the supervisory positions would have to understand and overcome any stress through their own unique ways of coping. Law, Pearce and Woods (1995) specifically described job stress for front-line tourism attraction personnel, which included organization, role characteristics, and work demand. In Malaysia, the hotel industry had received strong support for its growth from the Malaysian government due to its confidence on the sector's financial business capability (Kasim & Minai, 2009). However, the growth of the hotel industry is plagued with the decreasing level of service quality provided due, in part to the high rates of employees' turnovers.

Research Issues

High employee turnover rate, as stated by Hofhuis, Van der Zee and Otten (2014); and Lambert et al. (2012), besides being harmful to hotel industry's performance and profitability, it could also lead to the loss of psychological resources and assets with higher employee compensation, shorter employee engagement, low employee motivation, low job satisfaction, unconducive work environment, higher work stress, and higher workload. Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004); and Hendrie (2004), added that the high turnover rate would increase the costs of the recruitment and training of additional staff, increase in overtime payments to existing staff to alleviate the shortages, and the cost of disrupted service. Added to those factors, the remaining staff would feel pressured and felt overworked that could reach an excessive proportion level. Karatepe, Arasli and Khan (2007) were of the opinion that the front-line employees in hotels were underpaid, they typically worked long hours, had irregular schedules and carried heavy workloads. Thus, the research issue addressed in this research project was the extent of employee job stress level in the hotel organizations.

Research Questions

Job stress in the hospitality industry was the focused of the studies by various researchers (Kim, Shin & Umbreit, 2007; Papadopoulou-Bayliss, Ineson & Wilkie, 2001; Wildes, 2007), and they revealed that employees' stress level would be high if they were involved in work with repeated rotations, high work overload, working in anti-social working hours, and that they had highly emotional labour characteristics. Chiang, Birtch and Kwan (2010); and Hayes and Weathington (2007) indicated that even if there were evidence of stress at work in the hotel organizations, the stress could be managed in the same way as in any other business organizations, and that to control stress, the organizations should understand job stress as a concept with its reason and results. Therefore, the focus of study which formed

the research problem was to examine the relationship between employee job stress level with employee turnover intentions.

Study Objective and the Study Proposition

The objective of this study was to explore to what extent the level of employees' stress is associated with the level of employee turnover intentions. Thus, the study proposition was that there would be a relationship between employee job stress with employee turnover intentions, and that the higher the employee job stress with the higher will be the employee turnover intentions.

Literature Review

Employee Stress

Employee job stress was defined as a relationship between the employee and his or her work environment (Kahn & Boisiere, 1992). Stress could be considered as an individual's reaction to the characteristics of a work environment that appeared threatening (Jamal, 1984). Beehr and Newman (1978) examined various definitions of job stress and they concluded that job stress was the communication of work conditions with workers' traits that changed normal psychological functions. Their definition had also being acknowledged for stress that could improve performance. This was very important for the industry and employees. One definition implied that job stress would be the harmful physical and emotional reactions that could occur when the requirements of the job did not match the capacities, resources or needs of the workers (Sauter & Murphy, 1995). In an analysis, job stress could be defined as work demands that had exceeded the worker's coping ability (Karasek & Theorell, 1992).

Various researches recommended that work-related stress should be conceptualized and studied as a varied problem that involved personal characteristics of the individual, specific factors, and organizational and cultural framework in which such stress occurred (Farber, 1983). Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) recommended four categories of stressors: Physical environment; individual level (a combination of role and career development variables); group level (primary relationship-based); and organization level (a combination of climate, structure, job design, and task characteristics). Schuler (1982) suggested seven categories of work stressors in organizations: job quality, relationships, organizational structure, physical quality, career development, change and role in the organization.

Ramirez et al. (1996) found the most important sources of stress were work overload, feeling poorly managed with limited resources, managerial responsibilities, and dealing with customers. Concisely, stressful factors at work differed with the type of job and the stressors; and to some extent, the strength of relationships between stress and strain, differed from occupation to occupation. Even though some stressors might be common to all jobs, the stressors could be different as a function of job level or job type.

Job Stress on Organization's Performance

High levels of occupational stress could harm performance (Sullivan & Bhagat, 1992). Stress at work could influence an organization with employee absence, intention to leave, social difficulties, and poor performance (Ashton, 2018). Stress in the workplace could be an ordinary cause of job dissatisfaction (Golbasi, Kelleci & Dogan, 2008), but it could positively be equated with employee performance, productivity, and absenteeism (Chiang & Liu, 2017; Jamal, 1990; Robbins, 2003). Stress at work was a recognized factor for low motivation and self-esteem, decreased in performance, high turnover and sick-leave, accidents, low job satisfaction, low-quality products and services, low internal communication, and conflict among employees (Murphy, 1995; Schabracq & Cooper, 2000).

Job Stress and Turnover

The study by McFillen, Riegel and Enz (1986) investigated the reasons for restaurant managers' turnover. They indicated that the issues of pay; treatment by supervisors; work hours; and job pressure would lead to the intention for turnover. They added that those people who left their job were experiencing various forms of stress. A research work conducted in Australia by Marwick (1991) revealed, in summary, the reasons for turnover, and some of the reasons were stress, the lack of understanding on industry work conditions, and that they were too young to cope with job demand (particularly in the front-line positions).

Woodruff (1993) found that high stress level was connected to serious negative results, such as social and family problems, and decreased job performance. It could cause high incidence of work absence and burnout (Westman & Etzion, 2001). High levels of job stress had been displayed to be correlated with a range of negative results for employees in both the workplace and in their private lives, including physical illness and even mental disorders in serious cases (Brewer & McMahan, 2003; Ismail, Yao & Yunus, 2009). Studies by various researchers (Abramis, 1994; Cleveland et al., 2007; Jamal & Baba, 2000; Leung,

Chan & Dongyu, 2011; Savery & Luks, 2001) had indicated the relationship between performance and job stress. They discovered that stress could result in the following three possible outcomes: reduced job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, and increased turnover.

Employee Intention to Leave and Employee Turnover

Turnover intentions would be a vital stage before the actual turnover occurred. The turnover intentions could lead to the employees eventually leaving the organization. According to Bigliardi, Petroni and Ivo Dormio (2005), the employees that quit from their current job would take place after he/she started thinking of staying or to leave; though in the short term, the employee could have high intention to quit (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). The decision to leave the organization would usually be a much easier decision to make than the intention to leave (Blau, 2000). Voluntary or involuntary turnover would be the eventual decision of the employees. Robinson and Beesley (2010) contended that the intention to quit would usually start when an employee received an unfavourable situation and he/she would start thinking about looking for another job.

General management literature had suggested that work and non-work related factors could affect employee turnover rate especially with the influence of factors of job satisfaction level and level of organizational commitment. However, employees' sacrifices could help to reduce the turnover intention and such sacrifices could include the loss of opportunities for promotions, educational and/or training benefits, community sacrifice, and economic benefits. However, employee turnover had become an urgent and important problem to be dealt with for the hospitality industry due mainly for its dependency on the "human factor".

High employee turnover would lead to unemployment and obstruct economic activity (Mehrnoosh & Jouzaryan, 2016). Organizations with high level of turnover rates of full-time employees would likewise experience poor customer-satisfaction ratings (Hurley, 2015).

Research Methodology

Research Design

The qualitative research technique was selected and deemed appropriate in responding to the research questions. A type of qualitative design is the case study design where, in this study, only a single organization was selected. A case study design was used to ensure that

the information and data derived would provide a comprehensive understanding and an in-depth information on the various factors that would have an association with the employees' intention to leave and the employee turnover. The study employed the cross-sectional approach where information were collected on-site for a 3-day period in July, 2019, and there were 2-levels of analysis: operational level employees, and supervisory and management level analysis.

Study Organization and Respondents Selected

A case study of one hotel located in the suburb of a major city. The 3-star hotel had about 70 rooms and is part of a major hotel brand in the country. The hotel is quite popular due to its location, affordable room rates, and the food. There are several higher education institutes, government offices, banks, and housing areas within its vicinity. It had about 300 employees at all levels with approximately a third were operational level employees. The number of respondents selected for the study was 30 operational level employees with 50% male and 50% female.

Types of Data and Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected mainly via self-administered questionnaires by the respondents/employees and through and interviews with the supervisors. The interviews which was guided by using an unstructured questionnaire, were conducted by 5 trained research assistants. Secondary data was gathered though published research reports and scanning of articles in the various academic journals and proceedings, and also from documents and reports from the organization. The secondary information collected would form the basis and framework for this investigation.

Research Instrument and Scale

There were 2 groups of data/information required for the study: (1) Structure questions; and (2) unstructured, open-ended questions.

Demographic Variables: - Categorical Scale

- Gender
- Age group
- Educational Background
- Years of Experience in Current Job

Variable 1: Employee Job Stress

Dimensions:

Physical Environment: The work environment is non-threatening

Job Design: The job is not difficult/complex with very few procedures

Task Characteristics: Other employees had to complete their tasks before I can start my task

Variable 2 Employee Turnover Intentions

Dimensions:

Intentions to leave: The number of employees that usually will not be satisfied

Commitment level: The number of employees who have stayed longer than the average number of years

Available of jobs in other organizations: Employees leave during period there are ample job opportunities outside

Scale: 5-point Likert-Like Scale

1.00 - 1.80	1.81-2.60	2.61-3.40	3.41- 4.20	4.21-5.00
Very High/ Excellent	High/ Good	Moderate/ Average	Low/ Poor	Very Low/ Very Poor

The following decision rule is applied on measuring the extent of association between the employee stress level and the employee turnover intentions.

Chart 1: Decision Rule

Degree of Variation between the Employee Stress and the Employee Turnover Intentions	Results on Extent of Association/Study Proposition
0 - 0.20	Very Close Association
0.21 – 0.40	Close Association
0.41 – 0.60	Slightly Close Association
0.61 – and above	No Association

Presentation of Findings

Reiterating the Study Proposition

There is a relationship between Employee Job Stress with Employee Turnover Intentions.

Research Findings

Employee Job Stress Partitioned by Gender, Age Group and Years of Experience. There were 3 dimensions that were used to measure the extent of employee job stress. they were physical environment, job design, and task characteristics. For the physical environment dimension, the respondents were asked “Do you feel threaten by the work environment?” The male respondents indicated that they felt threaten at a moderate level, but the female respondents believed the physical environment was better. Thus, overall the physical environment was rated as good.

In the age category, those under 25 years noted the work environment as threatening, but those over 25 years indicated that their work environment was considered as good. Thus, this dimension was considered as only at an average level based on age group. In the number of years of experiences, all groups showed that the work environment was considered as good and therefore, non-threatening. Overall, the respondents thought that the physical environment was good.

The second dimension that was used to gauge the extent of employee stress level was the job design. The question that was posed to the respondents was “Do you find your job difficult/complex and were there many few procedures to adhere to?” On this aspect, the male respondents indicated that the job was difficult and there were extensive number of procedures to follow. Their female counterparts noted it as slightly better, rating it as moderate or average in complexity and in number of procedures. However, overall responses, based on gender, the results were indicated as poor.

In the age group category, those of 25 years and under, considered the job as very difficult and complex, while those over 25 years considered it as only moderately difficult or complex. Overall, the overwhelming result indicated the job as difficult and complex.

Those employees with less than 1 year of experience were of the opinions that the job was moderately difficult and complex. In contrast those with over 1 year of experience indicated that the job good as it was neither difficult nor complex and there were few procedures. Overall, the job design was considered by the respondents as moderately difficult or complex.

The third dimension used to measure employee job stress level was the task characteristics. Respondents were asked to response to the question “Do you have to depend on others to

complete their tasks before you can execute your task?” On this, the male respondents noted that they did had to depend on others, but the female respondents stated that it was only to a moderate extent that they had to wait for others to finish their tasks before they could start theirs. Overall, by gender the responses were noted as below average, that they did have to rely on others to complete their tasks.

In the age group category, those of 25 years or less also stated that they had to depend on others completing their tasks first, while those over 25 years indicated it only to a moderate extent, and that also represented the overall responses. In the work experience category, those that had less than 1 year of experience showed that they did had to extensively depend on others, but the other respondents of over 1 year of experience stated that they had to depend on others only at a moderate level. Overall, the respondents indicated that they did had to depend on others before they could execute their tasks.

The combination of the responses on the 3 dimensions indicated that the employee stress level was only moderate or average, due to the mixed responses on the 3 dimensions. The physical environment was rated overall as good, the job design was indicated as average, while the ask characteristics was rated as poor. The following table showed the detailed responses on the 3 dimensions and the overall scores.

Table 1 Employee Job Stress

EMPLOYEE JOB STRESS						
Employee Profile	Category	No.	Physical Environment	Job Design	Task Characteristics	OVERALL SCORE
Gender	Male	15	Average 2.73	Poor 4.12	Poor 4.01	Poor 3.62
	Female	15	Good 1.93	Average 3.13	Average 3.22	Average 2.76
	Overall	30	Good 2.33	Poor 3.63	Poor 3.61	Average 3.19
Age Group	25 and Less	21	Poor 3.50	Very Poor 4.70	Poor 3.43	Poor 3.88
	Over 25	9	Good 1.93	Average 2.82	Average 3.29	Average 2.68
	Overall	30	Average 2.72	Poor 3.76	Average 3.36	Average 3.28
Years of Experience	Under 1 year	16	Good 2.43	Average 3.22	Poor 3.93	Average 3.19
	1 to 3 years	4	Good 1.94	Good 1.98	Average 2.72	Good 2.21
	Over 3 years	10	Good 2.43	Good 2.15	Average 3.17	Good 2.58
	Overall	30	Good 2.27	Good 2.45	Average 3.27	Average 2.66
	OVERALL		Good 2.44	Average 3.28	Poor 3.41	AVERAGE 3.04
SCALE: 1.00 - 1.80 = Very High/Excellent; 1.81-2.60 = High/Good; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate/Average; 3.41- 4.20 = Low/Poor; 4.21-5.00 = Very Low/Very Poor						

Employee Turnover Intentions Partitioned by Gender, Age Group and Years of Experience
The 3 variables that were used to measure the extent of employee turnover intentions were the intention to leave, commitment level, and job availability elsewhere. The intention to leave dimension was gauged by the number of employees that usually were not satisfied with some or overall aspects of personal management factors, organizational factors, or workplace factors. On this aspect, the male employees were less satisfied compared to their female counterparts who indicated an average level of satisfaction. Those employees who were 25 years old or younger also indicated that they were moderately satisfied, and those over 25 years old stated that they were not satisfied. On the years of experience category, those employees with 3 or less in years of experience showed that they were not satisfied, while those employees with over 3 years indicated that they were moderately satisfied. Overall, on the Intention to Leave dimension, the employees generally were not quite satisfied with their current situation in the organization.

The second dimension used in detecting the extent of employee turnover intentions was the commitment level. This dimension was measured by the number of employees who stayed longer than the average number of years or longevity period. The male employees indicated that the numbers of years they stayed with the organization was similar to the average number of years, but the female employees showed that they tended to stay longer than the average number of years. All the employees in both the age groups also indicated that they tended to stay longer than the average number of years. Those in the years of experience category, the employees with 3 or less years of experience tended to leave earlier than the average number of years, while those with over 3 years indicated that the numbers of years they stayed with the organization was similar to the average number of years that employees usually stayed. Overall, on the commitment level dimension, generally the number of years the employees stayed with the organization was similar to the average number of years that previous employees had stayed.

The third dimension that was used to gauge the employee turnover intentions was the extent to which jobs were available elsewhere. The measure of this was on the number of employees leaving the organization during the period where there were ample job opportunities outside the organization. On this, the male employees stated that they would moderately consider leaving if there were ample job opportunities elsewhere. The female employees, on the other hand, would not leave even though jobs were readily available in other organizations. In the age group category, employees in both age groups indicated that they would only moderately consider leaving if there were ample job opportunities elsewhere. On the years of experience category, the employees with less than 1 year stated

that would very highly likely leave if there were ample job opportunities elsewhere. Those with 1 to 3 years of experience also indicated that they might leave, but those over 3 years of experience indicated that they would only moderately consider leaving if there were ample job opportunities elsewhere.

The combination of the responses on the 3 dimensions indicated that employee turnover intentions was overall moderate, which meant that they would likely stayed with the organization. The employees' intention to leave overall score was low as they noted that they were quite satisfied with their current situation in the organization. Their overall commitment level was indicated as average as the employees would tend to stay with the organization similar to the average length of stay of previous other employees, and that they would considered leaving the organization only if there were ample jobs opportunity elsewhere. The following table indicated the scores on each dimension by the various employee categories, and their overall scores.

Table 2 Employee Turnover Intentions

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INTENTIONS						
Employee Profile	Category	No.	Intention to Leave	Commitment Level	Job Availability Elsewhere	OVERALL SCORE
Gender	Male	15	Low 3.76	Average 3.11	Average 3.09	Average 3.32
	Female	15	Average 2.98	High 2.19	Low 3.89	Average 3.02
	Overall		Average 3.37	Average 2.65	Low 3.49	Average 3.17
Age Group	25 and Less	21	Average 2.78	High 2.34	Average 2.89	Average 2.67
	Over 25	9	Low 4.09	High 2.11	Average 2.63	Average 2.94
	Overall		Low 3.44	High 2.23	Average 2.76	Average Average 2.81
Years of Experience	Under 1 year	16	Low 4.11	Low 3.97	Very High 1.76	Average 3.28
	1 to 3 years	4	Low 3.64	Low 3.83	High 2.32	Average 3.26
	Over 3 years	10	Average 2.98	Average 3.37	Average 3.18	Average 3.18
	Overall		Low 3.57	Low 3.72	High 2.42	Average 3.24
	OVERALL		Low 3.46	Average 2.87	Average 2.89	AVERAGE 3.07
SCALE: 1.00 - 1.80 = Very High/Excellent; 1.81-2.60 = High/Good; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate/Average; 3.41- 4.20 = Low/Poor; 4.21-5.00 = Very Low/Very Poor						

Overall Extent of Association between Employee Stress Level and Employee Turnover Intentions.

The study proposition stated that there would be a relationship between employee job stress with employee turnover intentions, and that the higher the employee job stress level, the higher will be employee turnover intentions.

The following table showed the level of association between employee job stress level with the employee turnover intentions. The overall mean score of employee job stress level was 3.04 and the overall mean score of employee turnover intentions was 3.07. The degree of variance between the two average scores was only at 0.03.

Results: There was a very close association between employee job stress level and employee turnover intentions.

Table 3 Employee Job Stress Level and Employee Turnover Intentions

Personal Factor 1	Overall Score		Degree of Variation	Overall Score		Variable
Employee Job Stress	Average	3.04	0.03	3.07	Average	Employee Turnover Intentions
VERY CLOSE ASSOCIATION						

Studies by Ross (1995) had revealed that working in the hospitality industry could actually be quite stressful due to high customer service requirements and high expectations of the manager. This was supported in a study by Singh and Loncar (2010) where they also found a significant relationship between workplace stress and the intention to leave the organization. Stress in the work environment would affect employees' satisfaction and could lead to the intention to quit work (Applebaum et al., 2010). Stress could also reduce job satisfaction and increased employee turnover (Côté & Morgan, 2002).

Job stress in the hospitality industry was the focused of the studies by various researchers (Kim, Shin & Umbreit, 2007; Papadopoulou-Bayliss, Ineson & Wilkie, 2001; Wildes, 2007), and they revealed that employees' stress level would be high if they were involved in work with repeated rotations, high work overload, working in anti-social working hours, and that they had highly emotional labour characteristics.

In this study, some of the responses from the employees indicated that:

“Working in this hotel is not easy job since you have to handle and care different level of people. Mostly, we faced communication problems while serving our customers, it might be cultural and language differences, and if we have some problems with customers, it would emotionally affect the whole working day”.

“In hotel industry we have to be careful not to make any mistakes, otherwise we will be in trouble with our manager”.

Deery and Jago (2015) investigated many strategies that the hospitality industry could use to resolve the turnover crisis. They suggested talent management, work-life balance, and other retention strategies. Deery and Jago (2015) also stated the use of a combination of strategies which they analysed using a framework that demonstrated the possible interaction of organizational and industry attributes, such as personal employee dimensions, work-life conflicts, organizational strategies, job-satisfaction outcomes, organizational commitments, and employee retention.

Conclusions

This study was conducted to examine the extent of association between employee job stress level with the employee turnover intentions. A descriptive case study design was used to provide the framework for the research investigation and used as a guide in the data collection process, the development of propositions and instruments, and the analysis of data or information. Where appropriate, findings from previous research had been included to support or refute the results from this study. However, since the purpose of the study was to explore or investigate the employees’ situation at only one hotel, the results had to be taken cautiously. Regardless, however, the study did highlight aspects that should be of concern to the hotel management since there were differences in responses based on the different demographic groups pertaining to the aspects of job stress and the turnover intentions.

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